

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Secretary Acheson made the following statement at his news conference today:

VISIT OF M. JEAN LETOURNEAU

As you are aware, M. Jean Letourneau, Minister of the Associated States for the French Government, has been spending the last few days in Washington exchanging views with representatives of various agencies of this Government. The Ambassadors of Cambodia and Vietnam have also participated in conversations with M. Letourneau and with our own representatives.

A communique covering the substance of the talks will be issued later today and I will therefore not go into details now. Yet I would like to share with you the feeling of encouragement and confidence which M. Letourneau inspires. His thorough grasp of the situation and his constructive approach to the problems involved - military, political and economic - have impressed us all.

As you know, the Communist aggression in Indochina has been going on for six years. It has been greatly stepped up because of assistance received from Communist China during the past two years. Yet, under French leadership, the threat to this part of the free world has been met with great courage and admirable resourcefulness. The military situation appears to be developing favorably. It has been good to hear from M. Letourneau of the part played in achieving this result by the considerable quantities of American arms and material which the magnificent fighting qualities of the French Union forces, including those of the Associated States, have justified us in devoting to this area of the struggle against Communist aggression. The effort to make of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia secure and prosperous members of the free world community has made great progress.

I have been particularly impressed by what M. Letourneau has told me of what is being done to enable the people of the three Associated States to play the constantly greater role in their own defense to which they rightly aspire. Much has been accomplished toward the creation, training and equipping of the national armies. Units of these armies have distinguished themselves



in battle and are performing vital security functions in many parts of the country. They look forward with confidence and determination to assuming an increasing share of the burden of carrying on the struggle. Their effectiveness full justifies the program of expansion to which the governments concerned are committed and underlines, I believe, the soundness of our own decision, subject of course to the availability of Congressional appropriations, to render increasing assistance in building these armies. M. Letourneau described these programs in the course of his address before the Overseas Writers yesterday.

Favorable developments have not been confined to the fighting fronts and to the national armies. There are increasing evidences of the growing vitality of the Associated States in handling their political, financial and economic affairs. M. Letourneau's account of the manner in which these new member States of the French Union are envisaging and meeting their responsibilities was heartening. I do not think it is generally realized to what extent these new states in fact control their own affairs. Only a limited number of services related to the necessities of the war remain temporarily in French hands.

We in the United States are aware of the vital importance of the struggle in Indochina to the cause of the free world. We have earmarked for Indochina economic and materiel aid to a considerable amount during the past two years. We are doing our best to activate deliveries: as you are aware the 150th ship bearing American arms and munitions to Indochina arrived in Saigon within the last few weeks. We are now bearing a considerable portion of the total burden of the war in Indochina expressed in financial terms, although of course the entire combat burden is being carried by the French Union and the Associated States with the latter assuming a constantly increasing share.

The Communists have made a most determined effort in Indochina. Their aggression has been checked and recent indications warrant the view that the tide is now moving in our favor. Once again the policy of meeting aggression with force is paying off and we can I believe be confident that as we carry out the plans upon which we have agreed we can anticipate continued favorable developments in the maintenance and consolidation of the free world bulwark in Indochina.